

Jirayr Sefilian, Lt. Col. (ret.)
Biography



Jirayr Sefilian was born in 1967 in Beirut, Lebanon, where he attended “Gevorg Chatalbashyan” Armenian college.

Professional Experience

- 1983-90** Participated in the Lebanese Civil War as part of self-defense units of the Armenian districts of Beirut; an active member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-Dashnaktsutyun).
- 1990** Moved to Armenia with his family to join the Nagorno-Karabakh movement and was active in the formation of ARF self-defense units across Armenia as a military instructor with battlefield experience.
- 1991** Appointed commander of a detachment; 1992 commander of a platoon; and subsequently commander of a special “Shushi” battalion, which gained prominence as one of the most successful military units during the Karabakh War and was famed for conducting several very difficult military operations with minimal casualties.
- 1997** Appointed Deputy Commander of the Martakert Division. From 1997-98, served as the Brigade Commander (of the 6th defense district) of the NKR Defense Army.

Sefilian was awarded the **Combat Cross (First-Degree)** and held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Political Activism

In 1998, citing corruption in the army and policy disagreements with the leadership, Sefilian resigned from the military. A staunch critic of policies pursued by the authorities, in 2001, he founded the "Protection of Liberated Territories" NGO and launched a project for the resettlement of the wider Artsakh (including the seven liberated districts).

As a former commander and a harsh critic of the Russian-supported corrupt successive regimes of Armenia, Sefilian has been repeatedly arrested on politically motivated charges.

In 2008, after his release from prison, he founded “Miatsum” (“Unification”) national initiative, which was promoting the idea of re-unification of Artsakh with the Republic of Armenia proper

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(instead of independence for Artsakh, a policy line erroneously pursued by the successive Russian puppet administrations in Armenia). Other notable engagements include:

- 2009** Co-founder and managing member of “Sardarapat” movement.
- 2012-14** Managing member of the “Pre-Parliament” political initiative.
- 2015-16** A leading member of the "New Armenia Public Salvation Front" political initiative; led the "United Opposition Headquarters" created by the same initiative.
- 2015-18** A managing member of the “Founding Parliament” political initiative.

In 2016, in the aftermath of the “4-Day War” in Artsakh, in a major embarrassment for the ruling regime, Sefilian publicly revealed that the Armenian territorial losses in Artsakh amounted to around 800 hectares (and not a “few hundred meters” as claimed by the regime). On July 20, 2016, in response to his statement he was arrested and imprisoned for over 2 years.

In summer of 2018, after being released from prison, Sefilian co-founded the “Sasna Tsrer” (“Daredevil of Sassoon”) pan-Armenian political party (named after a medieval Armenian epic poem, in which the inhabitants of the region of Sassoon rebelled against the Arab invaders).

A 2018 [Washington Post Opinion Editorial \(by David Ignatius\)](#) stated: “Sefilian would be a candidate for defense minister if Pashinyan succeeds in forming a new government, though his strong pro-Western sympathies might antagonize Moscow.”

In 2020, Sefilian became a founding member of the National-Democratic Alliance movement and in 2021 co-founded and Board member of the National-Democratic Alliance party.

Lt. Col. Sefilian is a dual Lebanese-Armenian national. He is married and has two children.
